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WORKING CLASS AND NATIONAL DEFENCE

●

REPORT ON PRODUCTION.

*(Submitted by Comrade B. T. Ranadive to
the First Congress of the Communist
Party of India on 28th May, 1943.)*

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Working Class And National Defence

A REPORT ON PRODUCTION

[Submitted by Comrade B. T. Ranadive to the First Congress of the Communist Party of India on 28th May, 1943]

The political resolution draws our attention to the precarious situation on the production front. What is the essence of the situation? Production, the key base of national defence, is tottering at a time when the danger of invasion faces our country—this threatens the country with dislocation of transport, and industries in the midst of the food crisis and famine of industrial articles and creates the danger of blowing up the rear completely.

Such a situation directly endangers the front, the army of defence itself, which requires an ever-increasing stream of industrial articles and efficient transport to take armaments to the front.

The danger to our nation, inherent in this situation, is self-evident. Yet it is not realised as intensely as it ought to be, especially the fact that, it directly menaces our country's defence by threatening to cut off the supplies to the army. Its vital and direct connection with National Defence is not acutely felt and acted upon.

I. CRISIS IN PRODUCTION

The production crisis with its attendant dangers is part and parcel of the national crisis through which our country is passing. It is part of the economic crisis which finds expression in speculation, high prices, inflation, food-hoarding. The production crisis is not an isolated phenomenon to be tackled on industrial front.

It manifests itself as follows :

- (1) failure of Government to develop any production plan;
- (2) Government's failure to secure the co-operation of the Indian Employers to harness the industrial machine to the needs of national defence, and requirements of the people;

(3) the hostility of Indian Employers to any schemes of control sponsored by Government, which leads to continuous friction between Government and Industry—friction which has tremendously increased since the attack against the Congress and the incarceration of the national leaders, and on account of the Employers' failure to look at production except from the profit end;

(4) refusal on the part of both Government and owners to invite workers' co-operation; on the contrary a policy is followed by both towards Labour which refuses to do justice to the workers and provokes them to stop production to secure their immediate demands.

Here we get the same combination of forces as on the National plane.

The imperialist policy of defending India as a colony and denying power to the people, a policy of obstructing industrial development in the interests of British monopoly capital which drives the industrialists into hostility.

The industrialists, in common with other patriots, get provoked by Government's attack and denial of power, follow for a time the policy of deadlock and then end by taking to sheer-profiteering, under the guise of non-co-operating with war-efforts. They look upon any plan as interference with their legitimate rights and freedom to manage their industry as they think best.

With their opposition to the workers' legitimate demands, and deliberate provocation of workers which leads to stoppages—the owners create ideal conditions of work for the fifth columnist to bring production to a standstill.

And finally the workers, led by the Party, do their best to save production: to keep off stoppages, to isolate and smash the fifth columnist and the saboteur, and to expand production for defence.

Face Of The Crisis

At a time when the danger of invasion is acutest, when the threat of civil disruption on the food front itself is menacing, the crisis threatening our entire national economy, the front and the rear, and the complete disruption of our life must be looked upon as a major danger and its face must be studied in all its aspects.

Firstly, the crisis manifests itself as a crisis of declining production when for the very existence of our country our production should be developing at breakneck speed.

A few figures will suffice to prove that production of vital commodities is actually declining or, at best steady, except in a few cases.

The monthly Index for Industrial Production* in

February, 1940	...	116.9
February, 1943	...	110.2

Indices for individual commodities are as follows :

Cotton consumption :

February, 1940	...	98.6
February, 1943	...	142.6

Jute manufacture :

February, 1940	...	149.2
February, 1943	...	117.9
January do	...	92.0

Steel Ingots :

February, 1940	...	136.4
February, 1943	...	165.3

Pig Iron :

February, 1940	...	149.7
February, 1943	...	143.6

Coal :

February, 1940	...	123.0
February, 1943	...	115.0

The increase in the consumption of cotton does not mean that the problem of cloth has been solved—that the problem of meeting the need of the Army and the people has been met. Had it been so there would not have been a cloth famine leading to cloth riots; and cloth prices would not have soared by 4 to 5 hundred percent.

To take but one example of the rapid rise of cloth prices in the working class cost of living Index Number** for Bombay City,

the cloth Index was	255 in March
	374 in April
For Ahmedabad	264 in February
	315 in March

* Production Index from 'Capital', March, 1943.

** Bombay Labour Gazettee, April, 1943, Page 553.

For Nagpur	368	in	February
	450	in	March
For Jubbulpore	374	in	February
	445	in	March
For Madras	197	in	February
	205	in	March

In spite of the increase in cloth production people's needs are not met; that is plain.

Jute manufactures decline by 20 per cent and steel ingots register an increase of 20 per cent; at the same time, the vital commodity of pig iron shows a decrease of nearly 4 per cent. In the thirty-six months since February 1940, only three times did the production of pig iron exceed the 1940 level.

Most alarming, however, is the situation on the coal front. India's industrial structure, electric plant and entire transport depend for their motive power on coal. The demand on our railway transport, and consequently on coal, has become very heavy now that India is a theatre of war after the arrival of the Japanese armies of invasion on our frontier. Railways have to carry far heavier traffic for the army, for its supplies; at the same time, they have to meet the heavier demands of traffic for civilian needs—transport of food, etc. All this means production of coal must increase at a terrific tempo. Instead, what do we find? Coal production going down below the 1940 level when neither our industries worked night shifts all round nor our railways worked extra and carried much heavy traffic. Can anything provide a more serious warning of the breakdown of the industrial machine at the most critical juncture? Should we be surprised if factories are closed for months for want of coal, if textile factories had to close down when people were demanding more cloth?

Disruption From The Economic End

The production crisis, secondly, manifests itself as a strike-crisis to which the workers are driven by the policy pursued by the owners and Government. The immediate cause here is the growing disparity between wages and cost of living—disparity which throws larger masses of workers in vital and strategic industries to stop work to save themselves from immediate starvation.

The rise in the working class cost of living is seen in the following figures :

COST OF LIVING INDEX

City	For August 1939	For March 1943
BOMBAY ...	105	208
AHMEDABAD ...	73	173
SHOLAPUR ...	73	160
NAGPUR ...	64	165
JUBBULPORE ...	58	161
PATNA ...	109	243 (Jan.)
CUTTACK ...	103	239
MADRAS ...	98	170
LAHORE ...	120	317 (Jan.)
CAWNPORE ...	100	246
CALCUTTA ...	100 (Pre-war)	286 (May)

Needless to say, this enormous rise is not followed by an equal addition to working class incomes. Automatic adjustment of wages to cost of living, fixation of dearness allowance by reference to the rises in the cost of living, exists in a few industries only and that, too, has been enforced after strikes. Even here the allowance granted is totally inadequate—in the most favoured circumstances it is 60 per cent of the actual rise—barring the solitary exception of Ahmedabad. In almost all cases it is a mockery of compensation, hardly offsetting more than 20 per cent of the rise.

The Railways under Government control, the coal mine owner, and the jute bosses are the worst offenders in this respect. The Railway Board very nearly provoked an all-India General Strike of Railways by its policy of denial of adequate dearness allowance to stave off starvation; it was only the organised Railway Unions that prevented such a development.

The situation on the industrial front is then as explosive as the situation on the national front was on the 9th August. If it has not burst into conflagration it is because of us, our Party, which has built the Trade Union movement during the last fifteen years.

Nonetheless the situation is extremely serious. It furnishes ideal ground for the fifth columnist to operate on. Fifth Columnism, which paraded as patriotism for some days, can masquerade here as the champion of the exploited and as the militant defender of the economic interests of the workers and can attempt to delude the workers into a Go-Slow movement,

into sabotage of industrial production through strikes and prolongation of strikes.

The spontaneous indignation of the workers itself runs into the channels of strikes, thanks to the policy pursued by employers and Government.

The policy that provoked the patriot to hit at national defence, is provoking the worker to hit at national production, when the worker should be building national production for the defence of his country and people.

The industrial rear is unsafe. Production, the key base of national defence is tottering.

II. OUR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Comrades, in this critical situation what way did we show to our people, and to the working class? We, alone, of all the patriotic parties, developed a national and positive outlook towards production and attempted to implement it against heavy odds.

The patriots of the National Congress did their best to disorganise production after 9th August—in fact paralysation of production was their main instrument to win freedom immediately after 9th August. The National Congress leadership never developed a positive and patriotic outlook towards production as a weapon of national defence and, therefore, as the common concern of all people.

The Muslim League, has no outlook, no policy whatsoever on questions of production; on this as in matters of National Defence it leaves the initiative in the hands of the Government. The disorganisation of production, etc., has no importance in the eyes the League.

For us, on the other hand, national defence was not a mere phrase, nor a conditional bargain. We realised that the very existence of our country depended on its being able to defend itself against the Japanese invader; that our very future depends on how far the people of this country seized the initiative in defending their motherland.

We knew at the same time that defence and production went hand in hand in modern times. We, therefore, declared production—its organisation and expansion—to be our job, the

job of all honest workers, just as national defence is the job of all patriots irrespective of what conditions are offered or created by others.

The close relation between production and anti-fascist defence and our policy towards the former cannot be more simply summarised than in the following words of R. P. Dutt:

“The problem of strategy and production are closely related. In modern mechanised warfare it is estimated that four to five industrial workers and auxiliaries are needed behind every soldier in the firing line. Production is thus the main field of effort for the majority of the people in the fight against fascism. Here every man and woman can play their part and express the will to victory over fascism.

“The resolution to fight and defeat fascism means that we must equip the armed forces with adequate weapons of war to meet and overpower the Nazi military machine. We must ensure the effective transport of such weapons of war in time to the fighting front and produce the necessary industrial materials and machinery. We must provide the means of livelihood, food, clothing, etc., for the fighting and producing forces to maintain standards of efficiency. This all-out effort for production and for victory is not merely the job of the Government or those in command of industry. It is the conscious job of everyone to participate with the highest personal effort and to assist in the tasks of organisation and the overcoming of obstacles.

“Fascism can only be finally defeated not by heroism alone, but by superior weight of planes, tanks, guns, shells, to arm that heroism. This is the decisive test in modern war, which is in the last resort not merely a test of fighting capacity and of morale, but an industrial test of equipment, organisation, skill, and the capacity for united effort and sacrifice.” (*Britain in the World Front.*)

We Are Tested

The 9th August crisis put us to a severe test. It was a test of our political influence over the working class.

It was above all a challenge to us to implement our production policy in conditions of extreme political provocation.

The challenge, here, was to keep production itself going. And we won the first round. Throughout the country, wherever we had influence, industrial production was disturbed to a very small extent, things returning to normal within a couple of days in places like Bombay; no disturbance whatsoever took place in places like Sholapur.

This first round was won not merely because we were the undisputed leaders of the Trade Union movement but because we had been vigorously popularising among the workers the patriotic policy of National Unity and National Defence against Japanese aggression which threatened our country.

When after the arrest of national leaders, enraged patriots and fifth columnists began to call upon the workers to come out on general strike and to bring about deadlock in production, we boldly opposed this move, saying that strikes, instead of enabling us to force the bureaucracy to yield us National Government, would have exactly the opposite result. Strikes would not only have paralysed the keybase of National Defence, but would have intensified a thousandfold the conditions of anarchy and disruption, which followed in the wake of Government repression and fifth column-provoked sabotage. Strikes would have created extremely favourable conditions for the Japanese invader who was mustering forces on our frontier to attack our country immediately.

Workers who had for years followed our political lead stuck to their post of duty. They succumbed neither to the provocation of police repression nor to the instigation to go on strike, which was being conducted in the name of patriotism.

The result was that the saboteurs from the beginning had to rely on the owners, on lock-outs, on hired gangs to create trouble and bring about a stoppage. The first onslaught against production was thus warded off; the nation was saved; but for us, the entire industrial structure, including transport, would have gone up in smoke. We are rightly proud of the part we played in these critical days.

On the heels of the national crisis came the food crisis and the economic crisis, leading to an outburst of a spontaneous wave of strikes which, but for us, would have spread all over the country.

The worst period was between December 1942 and February 1943.

There were strikes for food and for dearness allowance. There were strikes in railway workshops, producing for war; in textile factories; in engineering shops, working for war; in dockyards and in the tram services. Workers in backward industries on strike; workers in organised industries on strike—such was the situation which faced us in the period—December—February.

It was no doubt a very critical situation. It seemed that what patriotic anger could not achieve, the disruptive economic policy of Government, driving the workers to desperation, would achieve, viz, complete paralysis of industry. And it would have done so, but for our Trade Unions and our patriotic policy.

Comrades, who averted an all-India Railway Strike when the Railway Board was refusing to grant additional allowance and when strikes were breaking out in Railway workshops? It was we who conduct some of the biggest Railway Unions like the S. I. R. and conduct other Unions in co-operation with other elements. But for our firm hold on the railway workers, there would have been spontaneous actions spreading all over India. We held back the strike-wave. We roused the workers to defend production, the keybase of national defence, against the suicidal policy pursued by Government.

We prevented strikes from spreading; or intervened in spontaneous strikes and speedily settled them; or withdrew them pending settlement of disputes.

Thanks to us, not only did strikes not spread but the loss of working days in spontaneous strikes was minimised, the strikes were short-lived and often operated as merely minor disturbances.

We succeeded in saving thousands of days for production and keeping hundreds of thousands at their job in spite of provocative economic conditions.

That was because we had realised that we could not make merry with strikes when the nation required our workers to be at their job for all the 24 hours.

We, to a large extent, succeeded in keeping production and transport running in Calcutta when Japanese bombs rained on that city. The treacherous fifth column tried its hardest to spread panic and to dislocate production and transport, in the interest of the Japanese invader. But the bulk of engineering workers and the tramway workers stuck fast to their post of

duty. The patriotic tramway workers, under Communist lead, kept the trams running right through the air raids and set an example of courage which inspired the citizens of Calcutta and keyed up their morale.

Comrades, once more, no other Party can claim that it has rendered such signal service to our country on this front; no other Party has. We alone, of all the parties, took the defence of our country seriously and, therefore, safeguarded production as determinedly as we would defend a fortress on our frontiers.

Working Class Votes For Us

What have been the results of this policy for workers themselves, this policy of standing by production by avoiding strikes, negotiating and settling them speedily. Has it meant that the interests of the workers had to be sacrificed for the interests of national production? Did it mean that all organisation was at an end? Did the workers themselves repudiate our practice or did they endorse it?

Our opponents and enemies no doubt expected that we would collapse before the strike-wave, born as it was out of economic discontent, and stand repudiated by the workers.

What happened instead?

The number of workers in Trade Unions organised by us increased from 2,00,000 to 3,00,000 between Lenin Day 1943 and May Day 1943 alone.

The advance will be still more striking if we were to take the figures from August 1942.

The addition of 1,00,000 workers to our Trade Union membership is a signal endorsement by the ordinary worker of the policy pursued by the Party—the policy of standing by production and settling disputes without recourse to strikes. How have we been able to register this increase in these worst days of strike-wave, when nothing but a strike seemed to be the way out.

Because by pursuing this correct policy we have been able to secure many advances and concessions for the workers—we have been able to secure some relief and thereby increase the worker's faith in his organisation and in us as his defenders.

Comrades, many of us have under-estimated our victories in this direction. We have secured timely relief, sometimes substantial relief, and thereby avoided a final crack-up in the

production front. Without securing such relief it would have been difficult to keep production going. By uniting the workers we did succeed in creating breaches in the stonewall of resistance of the bureaucracy and employers.

Our policy then has enabled us to defend the day to day interests of the workers and win important concessions, to save the Trade Union organisations from complete disintegration and ruin, which would have been their lot had they followed an anti-production policy, a wrong policy; our policy has enabled us to extend the base of the old Trade Unions and to build big mass Unions out of them (like those of the S.I.R., M. & S.M. Rlys.); found new unions and increase the organisational strength of the workers.

We have increased the capacity of the worker to defend his interests; we have added new strength to his organisations; we have organised hitherto backward and unorganised workers—all because we strove valiantly to save production from ruin and did not allow the workers to fall victims to economic and political provocation or to fifth columnist incitement.

Our Main Failure

Comrades, the account of achievements as given above itself emphasises our main failure. All the while we have been busy warding off the attacks against production. All we can boast of is that we saved production from collapse and from stoppage. But considering the key role of production in defence, considering the fact that the danger of invasion is acute, we cannot remain satisfied with what we have achieved during the past nine months or so, but must positively sound the alarm.

For we have not yet been able to claim that we have gone beyond the defensive stage, that we have anywhere led the workers to seize the patriotic initiative in any industry or concern to organise production as their job, as their national duty. No, Comrades, we have not achieved any success in this direction and this must make us think furiously.

Production—its organisation and extension, is the basic and main political task of the Trade Unions today. It is by organising production, by developing workers' initiative to overcome obstacles created by employers and Government, by creating mass movement to increase production by all

possible means that the Trade Unions participate in organising the national defence of our country. Every victory in production, every addition to industrial articles secured through workers' initiative, is a blow against the Japanese—for the freedom of our country—this ought to be the patriotic consciousness of every worker under Trade Union influence. Without this, our policy ceases to have any meaning.

Under our leadership the working class must be really seized with anger and indignation at the supreme chaos in production under the policy of Government and the employers; it must see in it a menace, a danger to our entire nation, a stab in the back of our people and must consider its patriotic duty to intervene and take upon itself the responsibility of guiding production. It must be moved by the terrible hardships of our people owing to shortage of cloth, coal, etc., and must come forward as the real champion of our people against all these by assuring them that every worker would serve his country and his people to his maximum capacity.

This is workers' patriotism; this is producers' patriotism—taking pride in his daily job at the bench. This is carrying our policy to our class.

Mass initiative for production is thus, first and foremost, a political responsibility—part of the fight for national defence. It is a political task. The Trade Union movement is the instrument, the working class army is to discharge this great responsibility.

A special responsibility rests on us who are the biggest single force in the Trade Unions to inspire the entire class to come forward as the organiser of national production for national defence.

Our main failure comes here. True, we have roused the worker to stop sabotage against production but we have failed to move our class, the workers, to develop a patriotic outlook and a different practice towards production. There is as yet no inspiring of the mass; no mass rallies and mass conferences for production; no individual efforts to lead the mass of the workers to be the best producers, much less workers' initiative to lead the people for better production for national defence.

The workers under our leadership refuse to disorganise production at the instigation of the fifth column; more and more

they fight against the temptation of a strike as the way out of the unbearable economic conditions. Yet the vital connection of production with national defence and workers' responsibility towards it is not properly understood by them.

III. THE POLITICAL ROOT OF OUR FAILURE

From where does this failure spring? It comes from our political failure to move the working class to play its specific role in the sphere of national defence.

To understand the seriousness of this, we must remember that production is on the Trade Union front what national defence is on the political plane.

It amounts, therefore, to abandonment of the anti-fascist struggle, of the struggle for national defence on the Trade Union front.

It amounts to giving up in practice the main political slogan of the Party and keeping the workers away from the greatest national and international war for liberation.

We have not yet succeeded in inspiring and moving the entire class into action for unity and defence of our country—that is a patent fact. The political resolution nails down a number of deviations which prevented us from mobilising the people for national unity and defence. These deviations perhaps operated with added force on the trade union front.

In any case even the best Trade Union leaders in the Party will admit that, in spite of our influence over the working class, the increased strength of the Trade Unions, we have failed to impress the workers with the urgency of national defence; national unity for defence has not yet become their war-cry, enthusiastically to be raised and to be fought for, as the only way to the independence of the country and towards further progress.

Why is this so? Firstly, because of the very same Left-Nationalist deviation of which the political resolution speaks. They have prevented us from putting inspiringly the cause of our country's defence and rousing the workers to offer everything they possess to defend our land.

Obviously when exposure of bureaucracy dominated our political propaganda much could not be done to put positively the line of national unity and defence.

This side-tracked our attention so completely that in putting across national defence, our comrades often forgot even to mention that our homes and people in Chittagong were bombed; our homes were going up in smoke.

In other parts of the country there were practically no reactions to the Calcutta bombing, which was taken as a matter of course, but which should have really led to angry patriotic demonstrations against Japanese imperialism.

We failed to whip up anti-Japanese hatred, failed to whip up anti-fascist hatred, even though a bald account of the atrocities committed by the Axis Power would have roused the hatred of any honest man and warned him against what was coming if defence was not organised.

Naturally with all these we could not impress on the workers the seriousness of the situation at the front and the imminence of invasion.

These deviations reached their climax in our failure to glorify the patriotic act of the working class in keeping production running immediately after 9th August, in our failure to carry forward the patriotic achievements of the Calcutta Tramway Workers, who kept the services running under the hail of Jap bombs.

The workers themselves did not understand what they had achieved. The patriots were slandering the workers as mercenaries who had deserted the battle of freedom. The latter had stuck to their jobs under our leadership but were getting demoralised under the barrage of propaganda.

It was our job to tell the workers that they had done a big thing, had acted for national defence. This was missed because our comrades thought of national defence and sabotage in the abstract.

Similarly, the constant fight which the workers had to wage against strike-inciters, against gangsters, to keep production running, against owners' lock-out, was not given a political turn, the defence of production actively conducted by workers was not explained in terms of national defence; the concrete fight carried on against the fifth columnist was not made the

starting point for a general mobilisation for unity for national defence and production. The key role which the workers had to play in averting the crisis in production, which was deepening at an alarming pace as a result of the policy of the owners and the bureaucracy, was not brought home to the workers.

Because of this the entire experience of the period between August and now—a period in which the working class defended production against odds—failed to educate and prepare it for the main and primary task of building production through mass initiative.

The worker cannot be roused to play his part in production unless he is made to realise the grim peril which fascist aggression means to our country, unless his patriotism is roused to see that the fight for the freedom and independence of the country now merges with the task of uniting the people to defend the motherland in alliance with the peoples of the Soviet Union, China, U. S. A., and Britain. He must be made to realise how production is the key to National Defence, how the crisis which is threatening production can blow up the very basis of national defence and that he, because he holds production in his hands, can avert this calamity and save the country. It is the consciousness of the peril and the call of patriotism which alone would rouse the worker to increase production.

Consider his conditions of work which are hellish today. Consider his past experience which has only shown that every advance in his skill has been exploited by the employers; that nothing is to be secured from the employers without a fight; that Government is an alien Government which suppresses his nation, his people and his rights.

The only guarantee is the burning patriotism and anti-Japanese hatred created by us, which makes him see in higher and higher production—work for freedom for his people—the guarantee of his liberation and that of his nation.

Our political failure to move him for national defence, make national defence and unity the full-throated cry of thousands, has meant our failure to move him for production—his main job in the struggle for national defence, the main job of all Trade Unions.

This leaves the initiative in the hands of the bureaucracy and employers, accentuates the production crisis, endangers national defence and prevents us from taking any effective step against it.

Production—Wrongly Put

Consequently, production, whenever it has been put, has been put as a technical or economic issue divorced from its vital and living connection with national defence or its connections with the needs of the army and the people.

And finding that there is not much response to this sort of appeal, comrades have either given up production as a bad job, contenting themselves with avoiding strikes and only paying lip-service to it.

Or making the worker gulp down our lifeless and abstract demand for increased production, some put it together with a barrage of economic demands, with emphasis on the latter.

The appeal to patriotism is lost; the appeal based on unity and national defence is gone; all that is left is the word "production" which is equated to economic demands.

The way in which economic demands are put show that they are intended to take off the edge of our advocacy of increased production. Comrades are afraid that the workers might misunderstand us, take us for the bosses' men, and think that the economic demands are our passports of honesty and integrity to assure the workers. This springs only from a lack of faith in production policy, lack of faith developed by divorcing it from our main slogan of national defence.

What is the total effect of this propaganda produced on the worker? Is he a whit convinced that next day he must work in the factory as the most efficient worker? Nothing of the kind. He is more than ever convinced that he is concerned only with his wages and not with production.

Having failed to move our class politically, our comrades either end in paying only lip service to production without any attempt to increase it, or present it in a more vulgar economic form in which it carries no conviction.

This has been yet another hindrance which keeps the workers back from discharging their main political job as producers—producers for freedom and defence.

Economic Demands Become Conditions

It is no wonder, therefore, Comrades, if some of us have slipped into the left nationalist position of conditional support to production. Gradually, step by step, economic demands are

put forward as conditions of increasing production. Not that our comrades crudely formulate them as conditions. No, but when they put it to workers that production cannot increase unless workers' demands are 'conceded', in the bargain they fail to rouse political enthusiasm for production—the net result is that economic demands do operate as conditions.

Can anything be more serious? What would you say if any member of our Party were to say, "give us National Government and then we will defend our country". You will say: you are laying down conditions to save your homeland; you are bargaining over the freedom and existence of our country; this is not patriotism; it is the same wrong policy of the national leadership, which landed our country in this crisis.

And yet on the field of production unconsciously we have slipped into this very policy. Economic demands are advanced in isolation from production. Consequently they appear to the workers as conditions of a drive for increased production. What we reject on the political plane, namely conditional participation in national defence, some of us seem to acquiesce in on the production front—a sharp reminder to us that we have strayed away from our basic line. It leaves the initiative completely in others' hands—the hands of the bureaucracy and employers.

Old Outlook persists

If we look at our propaganda and agitation, the role of economic demands as conceived by us, we will find that our comrades will have to change their outlook completely before they can become good organisers of production.

How do we agitate for economic demands to-day? What justifies these demands? What demands do we champion?

At each period we put forward such economic demands as enabled the worker to move forward politically along with the nation and enabled the nation itself to take the next step forward. For us the economic demands were an integral part of the struggle for national emancipation. That also meant that they must be such as to help both the workers and the nation in building national unity for the common cause.

We knew that the exploitation of the working class would not finally end unless capitalism was abolished and the means of production socialised. Still, neither in the period of imperialist war, nor before did we put forward these demands as those to be immediately realised. On the other hand, our demands included minimum living wage, eight hour day, etc.,—demands

Our propaganda and agitation, therefore, must be so conducted that the struggle for immediate demands must be understood by the worker as part of the bigger struggle for increased production and defence; the former must be understood to be dependant on the latter.

Workers must realise more and more that struggle for partial demands is not an isolated issue between employers and employees or between an irresponsible bureaucracy and workers only, to be settled through a trial of strength in the shape of a strike. Because it is part of the struggle for increased production, it can only be won in so far as the workers organise and increase production and do not imitate either the employers or the bureaucracy in holding it up.

In the rejection of partial demands they must see not only continued intensified exploitation but an attempt to strike at their efficiency and disrupt people's production and defence. They will thus realise that every struggle for partial demands is really an issue between selfish employers or bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the people as a whole, on the other. They will then refrain from taking to isolated and disruptive action in the shape of strikes, and realise that workers' initiative and unity to organise production and people's support to the workers constitute their real sanction to enforce their demands.

Instead our agitation yet continues on the old rails. Economic demands are taken in isolation from defence and production; they are presented as an issue between owners and workers or bureaucracy and workers; our comrades utilise all the old phrases in their propaganda and do everything short of strike in the old way.

The failure to correlate the immediate demands to the needs of national defence and production—the failure to completely overhaul propaganda and agitation, is a very strong cause hindering the release of workers from the old outlook towards production and smothering their initiative to develop it.

Where Does It Lead ?

Such an outlook really leads to strikes and more strikes.

In the present unbearable economic conditions the only thing that will keep the worker away from stoppage is his sense of duty towards production; that not having been developed and conditions getting worse, wrong propaganda only leads to strikes and more strikes.

Unless, therefore, the worker is politically roused, he would under the present conditions drift into a series of spontaneous strikes for economic demands. He would think that he is striking for just demands which are necessary for raising production. He would not realise that by doing so he is striking at the nation, at national defence. This would give the fifth columnist another chance to play havoc with production. Having failed to create a prolonged deadlock in the industry by provoking the workers to go on an indefinite political strike, the fifth columnist is now attempting to carry out guerilla warfare against production by provoking economic strikes, taking advantage of the horrible conditions of labour.

The failure, therefore, to overhaul propaganda and agitation not only leads to strikes but makes the worker a prey to fifth columnist sabotage, masquerading as militant defence of day-to-day demands.

IV. OUR POLICY IN RELATION TO STRIKES

Our political resolution calls upon us to "take a bold and open stand against strikes as they injure the defence of the country by holding up production."

In recent months, Comrades, we have no doubt avoided strikes and minimised the loss of working days. Yet it must be admitted that the general confusion in the execution of production policy was reflected on the question of strikes also and an open and decisive stand against strikes was not taken. We still looked upon strikes as a justifiable weapon of economic pressure—in the last resort, a weapon to secure the immediate demands of the workers.

The resolution asks us to give up this indulgent attitude and adopt a firm one to guide the workers.

All production to-day we consider as national production devoted to the defence of our people. Gone are the days when we could say it is imperialist or capitalist production with which we will have nothing to do.

Drive and initiative for increased production is the duty of workers.

How then can we justify strikes, stoppages of work which stop the flow of goods to the army, to our people?

Comrades, are there any conditions under which you will ask the soldier at the front to desert his post to secure this or that demand? If you will not advocate military desertion, you can neither advocate industrial desertion in the shape of a strike.

A strike, therefore, is as disruptive as a food riot or looting.

Do we allow the peasant to withhold grain from the market to secure better prices, or do we rouse his patriotic consciousness against it? Similarly, should we allow a worker to withhold production and hold up transport, and deprive the army and people of vital needs?

Granted that the employers are behaving brutally towards the workers; but the worker to reply back through strikes it to stab his country for the misdeeds of selfish employers.

We should then regard every strike as a political defeat for us, because it means that the workers concerned are not yet convinced by us about the disruptive role of the strike, about their responsibility towards production and national defence.

We should regard it as a suicidal gamble on the part of workers which will only disrupt their ranks without securing their demands, and hand them over as innocent prey to the fifth columnist and saboteur.

In the interests of the nation, in the interests of the immediate demands of workers themselves, strikes should be firmly prevented—that is the call of the resolution.

Where spontaneous strikes break out we intervene to do away with these disturbances in production.

The intervention in spontaneous strikes is to save the workers from the irreparable harm they do to themselves and their country by stopping production, to save them from the hands of saboteurs. It is to withdraw the strike as speedily as possible and it should on no account degenerate into ourselves prolonging it under one excuse or another. The success of our intervention is measured by one test only—how soon we convince the workers to give up the strike and see in unity for increased production the real sanction to enforce their demands.

Doubts Answered

Two doubts primarily assail the minds of our comrades when we take this positive and firm stand about strikes—the only stand consistent with our production policy.

Their recent experience makes them feel that it is not possible to repeatedly hold back the workers from strike.

And secondly, does not this policy towards strike mean the abandonment of defence of day-to-day interests, does not it amount to Royist policy?

Recent Experience

Recent experience is no guide, and in so far as it is, it proves exactly the contrary.

Our comrades have settled a number of strikes; won important victories; in some cases the workers were persuaded to go back without any change for the better to be able to negotiate a settlement.

In a number of these cases, they say, they found strikes on their hands, workers having been forced to resort to them in sheer desperation.

This happens because strikes have been settled behind the back of the worker, without convincing him that it was politically wrong to have gone on strike and thus without making any political preparations to meet the incitement by employers or Government. In these conditions speedy settlement of dispute is only a prelude to further strike.

A clear warning to the workers that immediate demands cannot be won through strikes; that strikes only disrupt their unity and strength and make them helpless before the employers and bureaucracy; a straight appeal to them in the name of the soldiers, their own brothers who are defending the country, in the name of our people who badly require transport and industries to run to meet their own requirements; appeal in the name of the country to develop production and not to stop it—these will prevent the vicious circle of settlement and strikes.

Our unions in the past have several times warned the workers against strikes; the workers have always listened to the call of their organisation just as they are doing to-day. It is only the voice of their organisation that is not firmly warning them in every strike, on every occasion, that to strike is anti-national. That is why some comrades think that it is not possible even to keep organised workers from strikes.

Day-To-Day Demands

Comrades who ask whether this policy does not lead to abandonment of immediate demands think that a strike can be an instrument of defending workers' interests. They think that by banning strikes we are removing our only sanction to enforce economic demands. They would like at least the threat of a strike to be kept to hold production for ransom.

By our own logic the pistol of strike is not directed either at the bureaucracy or the employers, but at the workers themselves and their country, since production must continue for national defence.

When the role of every strike, no matter what its cause, is to stop production, why should there be such confusion?

Because once again the old outlook persists, and in that outlook direct action plays a big role in defending workers' interests.

It, however, fails to see that the weapons of one period cannot be transferred to another period. In the past we were able to defend workers' interests not simply because we organised strikes, but because it was politically correct to organise strikes and through them defend the day-to-day demands.

To-day strikes do not organise workers; they only disorganise them. We require new sanctions, new weapons to defend the interests of the workers. This new weapon is found in workers' unity and initiative to lead and organise production and transport despite all provocations, i. e., the defence of day-to-day demands is found in exactly the contrary direction—not in stoppage but in efficient functioning of the production machine

How Is It Done ?

What pressure is exercised through production and unity based on it?

(1) The more workers discharge their patriotic job of developing production, the more unitedly they do it in spite of all odds, the more successfully they isolate the selfish employer and the bureaucracy.

The policy of the employer more and more stands unmasked as selfishness at the cost of the nation, of his country. It no longer remains an issue between the employers and employees but becomes one between the people and selfish employers. It enables the workers to unite the people behind themselves.

(2) Similarly it isolates the bureaucracy with its policy of no concession as far as possible.

(3) It forges stronger and stronger unity of workers themselves, because it is based on conscious realisation of their duty towards the country – a higher consciousness.

(4) This unity, far stronger than in ordinary strikes, enables the workers to exert the full pressure of politically conscious men through normal channels.

(5) This pressure of workers, doing their patriotic job against all odds and backed by the people whose battle they fight, becomes irresistible. It compels the Government to give up its policy of hostility towards workers' demands and to intervene in the dispute.

Here there is no opportunity for the fifth columnist, nor of falling a victim to the policy of the bureaucracy or employers; but there is an opportunity for conscious and patient building of strength for one's country, for production and on that strength securing the immediate demands.

Nobody suggests that it is an easy battle. Undoubtedly there will be provocation, victimisation and every kind of repression. But in the end nothing will count before the unbounded initiative of the workers to lead production for the army and the people.

By strikes you will only play the game of your enemy.

Our attitude towards strikes, therefore, has nothing to do with Royism nor is it an abandonment of the defence of workers' day-to-day interests. It relies on the workers, on the people, and on their patriotism to secure better conditions for them.

The confusing stand hitherto taken towards strikes was born out of the same nationalist pro-struggle-pro-pressure deviation. We must give it up once for all if the mass of workers under our leadership are to be properly guided to take their place in the battle for defence and production.

Non-Political Ideas

How far certain comrades strayed from a correct approach to strikes can be seen from the following. All understood that it was wrong to strike; but few put it as a straight political question connected with the defence of our country.

In asking the workers to resume work some comrades took resort to law and informed the workers that since the strike was illegal they should resume work. All that the workers thought was that strike with notice would be perfectly justifiable.

On the same score workers were frightened with police repression, i. e., disruption through strikes was presented as police repression against individuals. In other cases avoidance of strikes was confused with mere going through all the formalities of conciliation procedure and then awaiting big results to turn up.

All these have nothing in common with our policy which takes its stand on the basic need of national defence and production and estimates the role of strikes in reference to that.

Such explanations are opportunist and alienate the working class from our patriotic policy of more and better production.

Comrades, it is now easy to understand why we have not yet succeeded in launching a big mass-drive for production for defence and freedom. As on the political plane while we fought the fifth columnist, secured notable successes in keeping production going, we suffered from the same left nationalist deviation which either masqueraded as defence of economic interests, conditional support to production, or indulgence towards strikes, etc. It is this which prevented us from putting across our political line in an inspiring manner and from moving our class into action for defence and production, though we achieved big successes in routing fifth columnist disruptors and keeping production going.

We were unable to make the turn and launch a workers' counter-offensive on the production front because of this, with the result that we are in the midst of a production crisis. The rectification of these mistakes will give us the requisite strength to overcome all our weaknesses.

V. PRODUCTION POLICY IN ACTION

While the production crisis can be finally liquidated only by a National Government, which alone can effectively organise national production, the resolution suggests immediate steps which must be taken to implement our policy to organise effective and efficient production and transport.

What are they?

- (1) 100 per cent unionism and winning recognition of Trade Unions and mill and factory committees
- (2) Formation of Joint Production Committees
- (3) Production Conferences

Hundred Per Cent Unionism

Comrades, the trade union movement is the main instrument of realising our policy.

The weakness of trade union movement means weakness of the drive for production and national defence. Every worker

outside the Trade Union means a raw recruit, yet to be trained—a recruit who may misdirect his shot against his fellow-workers, against production itself.

More than ever, therefore, it is necessary that there should be hundred per cent unionism, because without that there will be no implementing of our policy on a mass scale. The entire class has to be moved for production and for that the lever is 100% unionism and nothing less.

We who have built the T. U. movement for the last fifteen years must answer this call for 100% organisation—our call to the workers then is: “join the Trade Union for defence and production and win your demands.”

To-day class-unity through Trade Unions has only this meaning. The Trade Unions must become mass-mobilisers for production drives. They must move the workers for more and more production and through that secure their demands. Only thus can Trade Union unity be realised as part of the struggle for notional defence.

The workers are, to-day, groaning under intolerable burdens. The cost of living is piling up. The lag between wages and prices widens. Adequate dearness allowance, wages, bonus, etc., are the demands put forward everywhere. It is the responsibility of the Trade Unions to win these demands and protect the workers against the policy of the employers and Government. Unity for production and 100% unionism are our basic weapons for organising the workers in vast mass Unions and winning their demands. *It is on the strength of this hundred per cent mass mobilisation that we want to eliminate strikes.*

The securing of recognition for Trade Unions, for its committees, assumes vital significance in this connection. They become big weapons to organise the workers for more and more production for victory against the invader. They allow us to avoid all friction between management and workers and still further help to eliminate all strikes.

Trade Unions, however, cannot organise production unless their members and militant organisers make it a part of their daily activity and show the way to the mass of the workers. Party members, Trade Union leaders, militants, all have to seize the initiative to improve and expand production. By their *political propaganda* and practical production work they must,

lead the mass of workers to become efficient workers, and to contribute their maximum to the country's defence.

The field of their actual work is, of course, the factory, the workshop, or unit of production. All their propaganda and agitation are tested here by the practical results they produce, by the number of workers they set in motion to tackle *concretely* problems of production.

Today for each industry the concrete problem is how to avoid waste, to economise spare parts, secure adequate raw materials, improve processes and methods which will yield better results. It also means eliminating absenteeism, doing away with the wastage of time, and rousing the worker to contribute his best to production. It is an undoubted fact that under present conditions of capitalist production, with low wages and intolerable conditions of living, there is no incentive to the worker to contribute to the full capacity of his skill; and that production will take a big leap forward if our propaganda encouraged them to do it.

On the railways it means (a) first and foremost, *saving of coal* used for locomotives—to-day when there is tremendous shortage of coal, when factories close down for want of it, every piece of coal saved on the railways is vital contribution to our defence and production; (b) quick repair of locomotives and wagons which can partially offset the acute shortage; (c) checking and doing away with wastage of wagons, economising wagon space and seeing that it is utilised for urgent and vital transport; (d) increased production of munitions, other war materials, and railway stock in workshops, etc.

In the textiles also the problem is the same, and the workers must take the initiative in removing all obstacles to increased production.

Bad raw material, which keeps down production; partial working of looms due to shortage of yarn; looms lying idle because of chaotic management—all this waste of our productive power must be removed.

The workers must take the lead in eliminating absenteeism; in saving wastage of time during working hours; in avoiding waste of raw materials; in increasing their skill and efficiency to give increased output and in suggesting improvements in machinery and processes which will raise production.

Wherever possible they must take a lead in demanding working of three shifts so that machinery can run for all the 24

hours and production can increase. They should secure the support of the people for this.

To-day one of the *main* tasks that faces them is to save the cloth production and control scheme from sabotage; to see that every loom and spindle is utilised in furtherance of the scheme; to suggest improvements in the scheme itself and solve all problems on the spot which are likely to arise in implementing the scheme (quicker supply of yarn, etc.). Their initiative will determine whether there is to be production of cheap cloth for all or not; whether the new scheme is to go the way of the old standard cloth project or whether it is to be improved and implemented so that increased production satisfies the demand of our people for cheap cloth.

It is obvious that all this cannot be achieved by a few shock troopers and a few Party members or T. U. militants. The entire number working in the factory or industry must participate to make this drive a success. It is the collective experience, and knowledge of all workers that can locate every obstacle and suggest improvements. It is their joint co-operation and determination that can implement them.

Workers in other industries have to follow the same path and come forward to improve production in the most practical manner.

To begin with, advanced workers must take the lead in forming workers' vigilance and production committees. The immediate task of these committees will be to protect the factory against sabotage and slow down movement; to bring to light all cases of inefficiency on the part of the management, hold-ups, failure to utilise full capacity of industry and sabotage practiced by the employers out of considerations of profit; to make concrete suggestions and take steps to overcome all these as suggested above.

The advanced workers will soon be able to draw in and enthuse the entire mass of workers, the more decisively they lead them through discussions, conferences and active steps to promote production. The latter will realise, through their own experience, that, organisation of production gives them an entirely new grip over the management and enables them to protect their interests while serving the nation. Every step forward in building production will mean greater and greater enthusiasm on the part of the workers.

Difficulties In The Way

No doubt there will be many difficulties in our way. Selfish employers will oppose any initiative on the part of the workers and will even victimise those who take a lead. They, like the Government, are afraid of workers' initiative; to them increased production means less profits and, therefore, they will do their utmost to defeat all initiative.

To take but one instance, the textile owners, who in the past have sabotaged all plans of standard cloth and who today intend to blow up the cloth control scheme which touches their profits, are certainly not going to tolerate any initiative on the part of the workers.

The superior officer, whether in private industry or Government managed concerns like the railways, will be yet another opponent of increased production. His conservatism and contempt for workers, his non-political approach and in some cases his fifth columnism, and finally his false pride as an expert and fear of exposure of his expert knowledge before his employers, make him adopt a hostile attitude towards everything coming from the workers and sabotage every improvement or suggestion made by them. Even where the employers are favourable, the opposition of the supervisory officers will often succeed in sabotaging production plans and setting the employer against the workers, unless the latter are vigilant and learn to counter every move of theirs.

And finally, there is the hostility, opposition and indifference of the Government. The bureaucracy is afraid of encouraging the initiative of the workers; it is afraid of the employers' sabotage and, therefore, seeks not to offend them in any scheme of production; it will not, therefore, encourage workers' initiative to which the employers are opposed; besides it is itself afraid of the workers.

All these hurdles have to be crossed through the unity of the workers, of the people, by positive action to develop production. The resistance of all these forces will be broken when workers decisively march forward to organise production.

We must remember that while we have to overcome the resistance of the employers, officers and bureaucracy, we have at the same time to secure their co-operation for improving production. *Our slogan of Joint Production Committee demands a ripartite co-operation.* While, therefore, mercilessly exposing

all sabotage or disorganisation for sake of profiteering, we must at the same time appeal to the patriotism of the employers to follow a patriotic policy. We must win over the patriotic superior officers to join us.

We must welcome every help coming from the employers and the officers, every facility given by them, as a triumph of our patriotic policy; our criticism and exposure should not make it difficult for patriotic employers to co-operate with us. All co-operation given by them must be duly acknowledged and given its proper place when we estimate our success.

Any tendency to regard production as the job of workers only and ignore the role the management can play is wrong and harmful.

Joint Production Committees

Comrades, we have already seen that the production crisis deepens, because there is no co-operation between industry and Government, between workers and employers.

There has been no joint effort to evolve any order out of the present chaos. Neither the Government nor the owners were able to pull off a single plan, the standard cloth plan for instance.

It is obvious that production cannot be set on its feet, and cannot be developed unless the employers, workers and government plan jointly and work it out.

The slogan of Joint Production Committees is our main slogan of organisation on the production front. It is a slogan which ensures co-ordination and co-operation between the three parties and without such co-ordination no systematic production is possible.

To implement it is no ordinary thing. It is to be implemented on the basis of workers' initiative and strength. The employers are opposed to it on the ground that the Joint Committees might meddle with the internal management of the industry. The Government is not eager to draw on the initiative of workers. The latest excuse of both the Government and employers to deny these Committees is that they might interfere with wage questions.

It is by overcoming these difficulties that we have to establish Joint Production Committees, which will secure proper co-operation between the three parties. Unless we are able to launch a mass movement for production, unless hundreds of

workers start on their job of improving production, unless the representatives inside factories function to co-ordinate workers' initiative and show actual results, there will be no Joint Production Committees accepted by employers or Government.

The establishment of a Joint Production Committee means that the workers have produced results, have won the people to their side and with the aid of these results made it difficult for employers or Government to refuse to recognise the efficiency of such committees.

To get Joint Production Committees established in all industries and concerns is our reply to the present chaos, in which instead of co-operation friction exists; it is our main weapon to forge ahead with national production.

It is through them that we solve production difficulties on the spot, avoid waste and save spare parts, which in itself will be a big contribution in India; encourage individual initiative to make improvements in the process of production; arrange for special bonuses and payments for new improvements and suggestions—in short, tackle production concretely.

The function of these Committees is really to organise production; it should not be mixed with the question of wages or other disputes.

The popularisation and realisation of Joint Production Committees is one of our basic tasks without which we will not be able to implement our policy.

Production Conferences

Immediately we have to mobilise the workers through production conferences. These conferences are our preparatory mass mobilisation for our production drive.

To be successful you must have politically convinced the workers that production is their patriotic duty. You must have inspired them with the thought that they hold the most vital trust of the nation in their hands.

To produce actual results these conferences must be preceded by a thorough discussion among advanced workers, Party members and militants, on the problem facing each industry, the technical difficulties, difficulties of raw materials, etc.

It is only on the basis of this that a concrete plan can be made—a plan to be immediately implemented by workers or jointly by the three parties. As a matter of fact such a plan should be ready long before the conference takes place; its discus-

sion should be arranged among the workers; and the conference should meet to discuss and endorse the plan. This will make the conference a body that gives a call to action and not merely a deliberative body.

The decisions of the conference should be vigorously pursued in the factories by our T. U. and Party members, etc.

These production conferences may be of departments, of an individual factory or of the entire industry.

Comrades, we are in the midst of one of the gravest situations.

The National Crisis deepens every day paralysing our striking power against the invader. It is accompanied by the food and production crises, threatening the nation with complete collapse of its economic life and defence.

The fifth column, the advanceguard of the Japanese militarists, exploits the situation.

The bureaucracy remains impervious to the danger; the patriot refuses to see it.

We have been battling against this menacing situation ever since the outbreak of the crisis.

On the political front we defeated the fifth column and foiled its game of sabotage and anarchy.

On the production front we kept production going and defeated its treacherous attempt to paralyse the defence and economic life of the country.

But we have not yet started on our main job of organising production, the key base of national defence.

The political resolution calls upon us to correct our past mistake and seize upon production as the main lever for mobilising our class for our policy of unity for national defence, for national government, for solution of the deadlock and release of leaders.

The working class has to fulfil its role as the *unifier* of the people in the anti-fascist struggle for liberation. It has to unite the people behind itself for the common task of national defence.

By championing production, by organising and expanding it for the army, for the people, the working class unites itself and the nation, serves itself and the country as well.

The word must go from this Congress to the 300,000 organised by us in Trade Unions, to the hundreds of thousands who are under our influence; to the railway, textile, iron, coal and other workers to fight the battle of our freedom inside pits and factories, workshops and mills. Efficient transport, increased production, maximum efficiency for national defence and freedom—these are our slogans for our patriotic working-class. This is the way to fight the battle of world freedom shoulder to shoulder with the great Red Army and the Soviet working-class, with the Chinese Army and the people of China.

